Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

2012 - 2013 Annual Report

Government of Alberta

Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

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Message from the Chair

Honourable Thomas Lukaszuk
Deputy Premier and Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education
408 Legislature Building
10800 – 97 Avenue
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Honourable Minister Lukaszuk:

On behalf of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) please find enclosed ACAT's Annual Report for the year ending March 31, 2013.

It has been a challenging and exciting year for ACAT as we provided leadership for student mobility in Alberta's Transfer System. ACAT continued to support the collaborative vision of Campus Alberta and a student-centric approach—building relationships, sharing best practices, and exploring opportunities for learner pathways.

Reflecting its commitment to relationship building, ACAT continued its expansion of the articulation model, with new committees struck in the areas of Psychology and Sociology. Articulation committees bring program heads, faculty, and government (Enterprise and Advanced Education and Alberta Education) together to exchange information and discuss issues related to admissions and transfer.

In October 2012, ACAT held its inaugural Articulation Committee Chair meeting, providing articulation chairs an opportunity to share issues and best practices regarding the transfer system. An Admissions Sub-committee was also struck this year, identifying that learner pathways are not limited to mobility among post-secondary institutions, but also include the transition into post-secondary. The Student Mobility Sub-Committee further identified opportunities for transfer beyond the Alberta Transfer System, with Council approving member institutions to share agreements as receivers with non-member institutions in the *Online TransferAlberta Guide*.

ACAT also recognizes the opportunity that learning outcomes may provide to achieve even greater comparability and compatibility of credentials—identified as a key objective internationally in the Bologna Process. As a part of its commitment to learner pathways, ACAT's Learner Pathways Sub-Committee has been exploring how transfer arrangements can be facilitated through the use of learning outcomes.

Together with its 39 member institutions, ACAT continues to remain committed to stakeholder engagement and communication both provincially and nationally. Council has worked towards ensuring common language and definitions within Alberta Transfer System documents and websites, including alignment of revisions to its website glossary. Council's work has also been informed by the completion of seven site visits across the province. Further, Council has continued to show leadership for student access and mobility through participation on the Western Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (WESTCAT) and Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT).

On behalf of ACAT, I would like to recognize the contribution of Council members, whose collective knowledge and understanding of Alberta's post-secondary system has been a tremendous asset to ACAT. I would also like to thank all Alberta Transfer System member institutions, the ACAT Secretariat, and the Ministry for their efforts as we work together to enhance collaboration and support student success.

Sincerely,

Ron Woodward

Ron Woodward
Chair

Introduction

Established in 1974, the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT) is an advisory agency accountable to the Minister of Enterprise and Advanced Education and, in support of Campus Alberta, responsible for providing advice and guidance regarding post-secondary admission and transfer policy.

ACAT works with its stakeholders for the benefit of learners to ensure smooth transitions from secondary to post-secondary and among post-secondary institutions.

Vision

Alberta's post-secondary institutions work cooperatively to provide a transfer system that is responsive to the needs of learners in the matters of admissions, transfer credit, and recognition of prior learning.

Mission

The mission of ACAT is to be a catalyst for beneficial change and an advocate for learners in the areas of post-secondary admission and transfer throughout Campus Alberta and the Alberta Transfer System. ACAT provides leadership and direction, as a cornerstone of Campus Alberta, in the improvement of educational opportunities for Alberta students through inter-institutional transfer. ACAT is committed to supporting and improving communication among Alberta post-secondary institutions and to promoting the advantages of a system of education, with all that this means for educational planning for the benefit of learners.

Operating Principles

The Council endorses the following as basic to its purpose and activities:

(a) Support Campus Alberta's core objectives by facilitating learners to successfully navigate the Transfer System and foster lifelong learning in the advanced learning system.

(b) Student access to higher education and the opportunity for student mobility among institutions of higher education in Alberta shall be optimized.

(c) Negotiation of opportunities for student mobility shall be based on the recognition that while learning experiences may differ in a variety of ways, their substance may be virtually equivalent in terms of learning outcomes and rigor.

(d) Effective academic advising, career counseling and optimum mobility require that the student have prior knowledge of at least the minimum transfer credit that can be awarded.

(e) Individual institutions have the primary responsibility for instructional programs, even though responsibility for higher education is shared among various constituents. The responsibility of institutions includes program design and delivery, determination of academic prerequisites and student admission criteria, and certification of the academic achievement of students.

(f) Institutions have the responsibility and the prerogative to investigate the total educational background of applicants seeking admission.

(g) Post-secondary institutions are committed to developing and maintaining clearly stated policies and procedures for consideration of transfer credit and to applying them in a consistent manner.

(h) After students are granted admission to an institution under a transfer arrangement, they shall be granted the same rights and privileges as students who began their studies at the institution.

Goals and Strategies

In 2012, ACAT identified admission, transfer, communication and influence as its core business. The following goals and associated strategies were identified in its 2012 - 2015 Action Plan to support Council's core business.

Access and Mobility

Goal 1

Facilitate the development, maintenance and communication of fair and equitable admission practices and policies at post-secondary institutions.

Priority Initiatives

1.1 Facilitate the development, implementation and maintenance of fair and equitable admission and transfer practices.

1.2 Support ministry and cross-ministry driven learner pathway initiatives.

1.3 Learners receive appropriate education credit as they transfer into and between Alberta Transfer System member institutions.

1.4 Monitor the effectiveness of the transfer system.

Collaboration

Goal 2

Foster and strengthen collaboration with and between Alberta Transfer System stakeholders.

Priority Initiatives

2.1 Ensure communication channels and mechanisms are in place to facilitate K-12 to post-secondary transitions.

2.2 Provide opportunities to increase engagement, exchange information and enhance coordination with and between Alberta Transfer System members.

2.3 Identify or engage in research opportunities that will provide a more thorough understanding of barriers and opportunities related to the enhancement of learner pathways.

Influence

Goal 3

Alberta's advanced learning system is recognized as a leader on learner pathways.

Priority Initiatives

3.1 Seek opportunities to expand the availability of student mobility and transfer data in order to better understand mobility patterns.

3.2 Develop and enhance system-wide principles, policies, and procedures to continuously enhance learner pathways.

3.3 Modernize system technology to assist Alberta Transfer System members in the provision of accurate and current learner pathway information.

3.4 Continue to provide ACAT representation on interprovincial and national admission and transfer related initiatives.

Results

Council has made a number of accomplishments in support of its core business over and above the ongoing day-to-day operational requirements performed by the ACAT Secretariat. The following bullets highlight relevant transfer system and student mobility data and Council's key activities.

Access and Mobility:

- Data:
  - **High School Graduate Transition Rate**: 30,572 Alberta high school students graduated in June 2011. 11,454 of these graduates transitioned into post-secondary for the 2011-12 academic year, resulting in a 37.5% high school transition rate for Alberta graduates (Fall 2011 ASI Report).
  - **Alberta Post-Secondary Graduates**: In 2009-2010, 90% of transfer graduates surveyed were satisfied with the transfer credit they received, with a high majority (89%) receiving transfer credit or advanced standing for courses taken at other institutions (*Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education Alberta Graduate Outcomes Survey Class of 2009-2010: Transfer Graduates Final Report*).
  - **Transfer Agreements**: Currently, there are over 76,000 transfer agreements, including over 31,000 by-course and 900 by-program active transfer agreements. In 2008–09, there were over 73,000 transfer agreements (Transfer Agreement Archival and Retrieval System (TAARS)).
  - **Student Mobility**: In 2011, 12,472 students moved between Alberta Transfer System member institutions (a 1.2% increase from the previous year), with an additional 6,989 students transferring into Alberta from out of province and country (2011 Transfer Patterns Report).
- New Student Mobility Reporting: In response to identified limitations of available transfer system data, a new approach to student mobility reporting using 2012 Learner and Enrollment Reporting System (LERS) data is under development. The first phase of this approach is targeted to be available on the ACAT website by December 2013.

Collaboration and Influence:

- ACAT Website Glossary: Completed a review of terminology to ensure common language and definitions within Alberta Transfer System documents and websites, resulting in the posting of a revised glossary on the ACAT website.
- Members in Good Standing: Provided member in good standing letters to Alberta Transfer System members recognizing their contribution to the system and noting opportunities for improvement.
- Communication: Drafted an initial concept for a monthly communication—*Spotlight on the Alberta Transfer System*—to highlight transfer system and learner pathways activities for institutions and other key stakeholders.
- Stakeholder Engagement:
  - Delivered presentations on the Alberta Transfer System and role of ACAT to student groups (Council of Alberta University Students, the Alberta Students' Executive Council and Alberta Graduate Council) and post-secondary institution Student Advisors at the Alberta Services for Students Conference.
  - Participated in the annual Contact Persons' meeting. Outcomes from the meeting were used by the ACAT Secretariat to identify enhancements for systems used by the Contact Persons and Assistants.

- Participated in seven site visits to discuss issues, opportunities and successes with member institutions. Institutions included Ambrose University College; Canadian University College; DeVry Institute of Technology, Calgary; Medicine Hat College; Portage College; Prairie Bible College and Yukon College.

> Articulation Committees: The nine existing program area Articulation Committees continued to meet, further fostering relationships among institutions and discussing student mobility opportunities.

> Pan-Canadian Collaboration—Western Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (WESTCAT) and Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT): Advocated for the enhancement of student access and mobility on the national level through participation on WESTCAT and PCCAT, including support for the annual conferences.

ACAT Sub-Committees—Access and Mobility, Collaboration, and Influence:

> Articulation Sub-Committee:

- Initiated articulation committees in the areas of Psychology and Sociology. Plans are also in place to expand into two new areas in 2013-14. Research to base future articulation committee expansion on student mobility and transfer agreement data continues.
- In October 2012, the inaugural Articulation Committee Chair meeting was held. The meeting provided an opportunity for articulation chairs to share issues and best practices regarding the transfer system as identified by the articulation committees. In addition, Council provided an overview of its current initiatives and discussed how relationships among the community of articulation committees could be best supported and expanded.

> Learner Pathways Sub-Committee: Continued to explore how transfer arrangements can be facilitated through the use of learning outcomes, including completion of an initial comparison and analysis of examples of existing by-program agreements.

> Admissions Sub-Committee: Initiated plans for information gathering of current admission practices to identify best practices.

> Student Mobility Sub-Committee: In October 2012, Council approved the sub-committee recommendation to allow Alberta Transfer System member institutions to post agreements as receivers with non-member institutions in TAARS.

> Membership Sub-Committee: Initiated a review of an institution's membership application to the transfer system (recommendation pending in 2013).

Members of the Council

Mr. Ron Woodward
Chair, Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer

Mr. Larry Hlushak
Public Member

Mr. Jim Gibbons
Public Member

Dr. Robert Boudreau
Vice Provost & Associate Vice President, Academic
The University of Lethbridge

Dr. William (Bill) Connor
Vice-Provost, Academic Programs and Instruction
University of Alberta

Dr. Christine Johns
Director, Academic Strategies
University of Calgary

Mr. Joel Ward
President, CEO
Red Deer College

Ms. Alice Wainwright-Stewart
Vice-President, Academic, Innovation and Research
Lakeland College

Ms. Anna Kae Todd
Vice-President, Learning Services
Bow Valley College

Dr. Jonathan Strand
Associate Vice President Academic & Dean of Undergraduate Studies
Concordia University College of Alberta

Mr. David Aldrich
Vice President of Student Experience and Admissions
Alberta College of Art and Design

Mr. Vincent Steinhauer
Faculty Member
Blue Quills First Nations College

Mr. Alastair MacKinnon
Council of Alberta University Students

Ms. Tessa Cocchio
Alberta Students Executive Council

Ms. Merla Bolender
Executive Director
Alberta Education

Ms. Christine Savage
Director
Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education

Ms. Ann Marie Lyseng
Senior Manager, Learner Pathways
Alberta Enterprise and Advanced Education

Note: *There are currently three recommendations under consideration for Ministerial appointment. They represent the Comprehensive Academic and Research Institution, Baccalaureate and Applied Studies Institution, and Polytechnical Institution sectors.*